

## And Avraham expired and died at a good old age, mature and content. (25:8)

The perfection and wholesomeness in life which Sarah *Imeinu* achieved was also merited by Avraham *Avinu*. *Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl*, would refer to Avraham *Avinu's* life as *zate' teg*, days for which he was content and satisfied, knowing that he had lived every moment of his life in accordance with the *ratzon*, will, of Hashem. One hundred seventy-five years: thirty days a month, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. He did not waste a moment of his life. When one lives in such a manner, leaving this world is merely crossing over to the next world. The *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, would weep copious tears as he rebuked himself when he was unable to account for half-an-hour. He was not completely certain what he did during this time. He would say, "Half an hour is thirty minutes, with each minute affording me the time to learn two hundred letters of Torah."

The *Ponovezher Rav, zl*, spoke on *Shabbos mevorchim ha'chodesh*, when the blessing ushering in the forthcoming month is recited, to his *yeshivah* students. He began, "We pray, *V'sitein lanu chaim aruchim*, 'May You give us long life.' At present, we are praying for the following month. Why do we interject and ask for long life? How does 'long' life interplay with the blessing for the following thirty days?" The *Rav* explained that a moment saved and used for the correct purpose is *chaim aruchim*, long life, since by our actions we can transform one minute into *nitzchiyus*, eternity. Thus, we ask Hashem to grant us the ability and resolution to merit to convert the mundanity of life into purposeful living in accordance with the will of Hashem, thereby elevating it to eternity.

Unfortunately, we measure time by its generic value, rather than by its potential, i.e., what can be achieved in its duration. If we would be able to perceive the idea of *nitzchiyus*, eternity, it might alter our attitude. *Horav Yosef Nendick, zl, Mashgiach Yeshivas Kletzk*, offered the following portrayal in an effort to make his students develop an understanding and appreciation of the concept of eternity. "Imagine, if you will," he began, "that our *bais hamedrash* was filled floor to ceiling with poppy seeds. Once every hundred years, a bird would eat one poppy seed. Can you even begin to imagine how long it would take until all the poppy seeds were gone? Now, imagine that our entire city (Yanov – a city in the Ukraine) was completely filled with poppy seeds, top to bottom, up to the sky. This time, the bird would visit once every thousand years. It would certainly take many lifetimes until the city would be left clean of its poppy seeds. One more example: if the entire world, ground to sky, were to be filled with poppy seeds, and the bird appeared every ten thousand years to take one seed, how long would it be before the world was emptied of its poppy seeds? At that point, the *Mashgiach* became animated and cried out, *Aber kein netzach is dos nisht*, "But eternity, it is not!" In other words, the word eternity, by its very definition, means without parameter, forever, until infinity. There is no cap on eternity. Likewise, we live a foreordained number of years. Some live longer than others, but all live a predestined, measured number of years. Hashem determines the length of our earthly visit. Regardless of its length, it is always too short. When we realize that with every moment of life used properly, we can acquire eternity, we would come to realize that to waste time would not only be sinful, it would be downright fatuous.

Having said this, we understand that stealing time, depriving one of using his time properly, is an unforgivable theft for which one cannot compensate. *Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, zl*, explains that one can repay what he stole from someone. If he stole time, however, it cannot be repaid. Perhaps that person was destined to do something great, something exceptional at that very moment. Now, the moment is gone forever. The next moment is not the same as the present. Once it passes, it is lost for eternity.

When the *Ohr Sameach* was *niftar*, the *Rogatchover Gaon, zl*, who was his colleague in Dvinsk, eulogized him. He bewailed the inestimable loss to *Klal Yisrael*. “*Rav Meir Simcha* learned Torah with such diligence, similar to a person who is rescuing his possessions from a raging fire. Under such overwhelming circumstances, one does not stop to look at the clock: Is it the middle of the night? Is it the afternoon, and I have things to do? Does rescuing my possessions involve difficulty? No! One rolls up his sleeves and acts, doing whatever he must do to save whatever he can. This was *Rav Meir Simcha*. Every minute that could be devoted to Torah he pulled out of the fire.” He was salvaging that minute to learn Torah. Another minute, another minute; every minute was precious. How could he abandon it?”